

no big counts were made because the birds showed less tendency to flock than in the preceding years. In 1974, one bird was noted on September 2 and thereafter scattered individuals and groups were present until January 10, 1975 when at least 35 were recorded. The species reappeared on October 7, 1975 when four birds were present. This was another season of scattered groups with numbers hard to assess. In 1976, three birds were noted on September 1. Numbers started to build up in October and towards the end of the season a tendency to flock was apparent. On October 31, 72 birds were counted feeding in one area. I estimated 100 birds to be present in the Swamp. On January 6, 1976 I counted 71 birds in the same area and a later recount gave a total of 80+. Again no immature birds have been seen.

Yellow-billed Spoonbill, *Platalea flavipes*. During December 1973 I saw two birds on each of three occasions. 1974—nil. 1975—two birds on December 25 and two and perhaps a third, on December 29. 1976—three on December 7 and one on December 17.

Whistling Kite, *Haliastur sphenurus*. Usually two birds appear to be present, but at the drying out of the Swamp the number is augmented, and up to nine birds have been seen together. This might be explained by: (1) Presence of young of the year. (2) The fall of the Swamp level providing improved food supply. (3) The activity of shooters providing food for scavengers. The presence of six birds on June 5, 1974 (when the Swamp level was still low) may tend to discount (1).

Black-tailed Native-hen, *Gallinula ventralis*. My only additional records have been for 1975 which appears to have been a moderate invasion year. At Benger I saw seven on December 11 and four on December 18.

Coot, *Fulica atra*. I have a strong impression that over the past four years the number of Coot appearing at Benger has been low. Records of Coot in any number are restricted to October and November, mainly the latter month. This pattern may have been due to good seasons providing favourable conditions elsewhere.

#### ADDITIONS TO FAUNA OTHER THAN BIRDS

Western Water-rat, *Hydromys fuliginosus*. One, dead, found on a track by member of the W.A. Naturalists' Club excursion on November 9, 1975.

#### CONSERVATION

The future of Benger Swamp now appears to be assured. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife is acquiring blocks in the Swamp and now has a controlling interest. An imaginative comprehensive management plan is being developed.

#### VEGETATION

With the interest now being focussed on the Swamp I have abandoned an intention of adding to the previous notes on vegetation in the hope that one of our specialists will provide a detailed treatment. However, the following corrections are desirable: the *Typha* is *T. orientalis*, not *angustifolia* and the common *Lemna* is *L. oligorrhiza*.

#### FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**The Mediterranean Snail (*Theba pisana*) on Rottnest Island.**—Dr. D. L. Serventy outlined the history of the spread of the Mediterranean snail on Rottnest in the *W.A. Naturalist* (2 (2), 1949). These snails were very much in evidence and a familiar sight as they clung to the vegetation in clusters. A favourite resting place was the vertical flowering stems of the introduced plant *Asphodelus fistulosus* which had become established along the roads and tracks traversing the Island.

During a visit to Rottneest in June, 1975, I noticed that these snails were no longer abundant and in fact were moderately difficult to find. A fairly intensive search showed them to still be present but there had been a catastrophic collapse of the original population. This suggests that these snails have come under some form of biological control in recent times.

—D. H. PERRY, Victoria Park.

**Sighting of Black Falcon, Lancelin District.**—At about 8.30 a.m. on January 24, 1976, 3.5 km north of the Lancelin golf links on the sand track to Wedge Island, a Black Falcon (*Falco subniger*) was seen. The bird was in flight and then perched on the top of a Christmas tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*) at a distance of 40 paces. The sighting was made with 10 x 50 binoculars with the sun at the back of the observers who were themselves in shadow and there could be very little doubt as to the identification.

The area in which the bird was seen was typical of the district—undulating, covered with knee-high heath with occasional stands of shrubs rising to a height of about two metres. The whole area was rich in insect life, with beetles, some of which were of considerable size and what appeared to be tree crickets, predominating. From the same observation point several Kestrels, two Little Falcons, one Spotted Harrier and one Black-shouldered Kite were also seen.

—A. FEWSTER and M. T. MILLARD.

**Mistletoe-bird feeding on Black Nightshade Berries.**—On September 19, 1976 a male Mistletoe-bird (*Dicaeum hirundinaceum*) was observed feeding on the berries of a Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*) growing within a fowl-run.

The visits were made during the morning and only the male visited the feeding site. Each visit was heralded by the calls of the bird after its arrival in a nearby Wandoo. The next move was to a support beam on the run, thence to a dip in the wire and, when inside, to the nightshade. After removing a berry the bird flew each time to a projecting twig within the cage, appeared to masticate the fruit, dropping part thereof, swallowing the rest and returning for a further fruit. Two or three berries were thus consumed during the visit. Exit was then made to the outside support beam and a direct flight out across the valley to a Marri some 200 metres away, followed. Several such visits were made during the morning. The nightshade bore a good proportion of black, ripe fruit.

The following week seeds of what appeared to be the above fruit were found inside, at the bottom, of a nest of the Western Silvereye (*Zosterops gouldi*), apparently recently vacated. These birds had been seen feeding on the nightshade along with the Mistletoe-bird.

—KEVIN GRIFFITHS, Parkerville.

**Some Notes on the Native Poplar, *Codonocarpus cotinifolius*.**—The Native Poplar is a fairly common plant along the eastern fringes of the South-West province and across the Eremean province. It is a striking plant and easy to recognise on account of its bright green foliage, a shade of green not common in our arid and semi-arid regions. Along the eastern side of the South-West province this plant regenerates prolifically after a fire, grows rapidly to a height of two to three metres and at the age of about seven years it dies down. Regeneration is rarely seen in this region except following a fire.

In the arid country stretching across the Eremean province to the Western Australian border, the Native Poplar is a feature of many of the landscapes. On a journey to Alice Springs (June, 1973) living specimens of Native Poplar were almost non-existent. A great many dead ones were to be seen and these appeared to have been dead for